THE HISTORY OF ROCK 72

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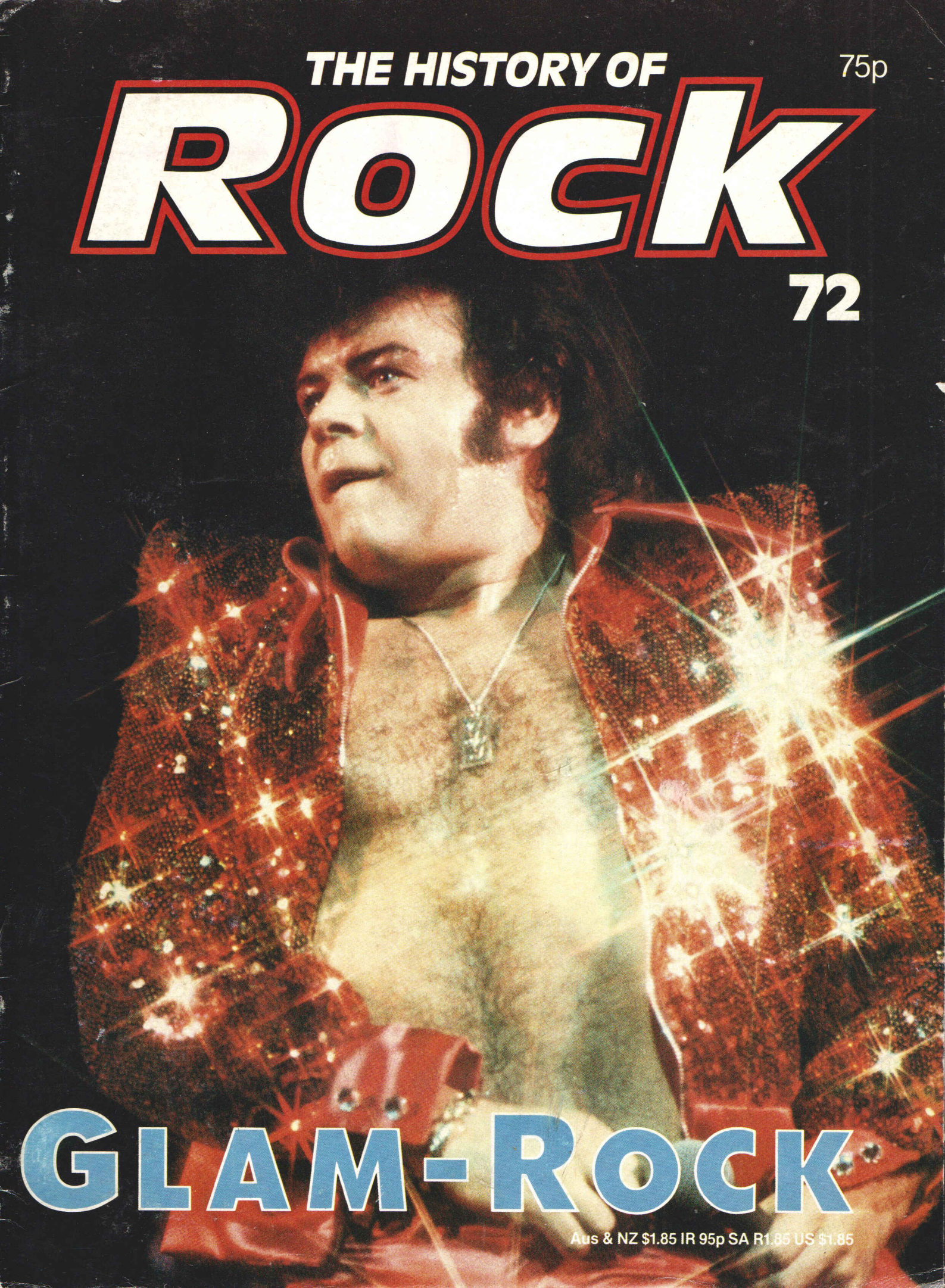

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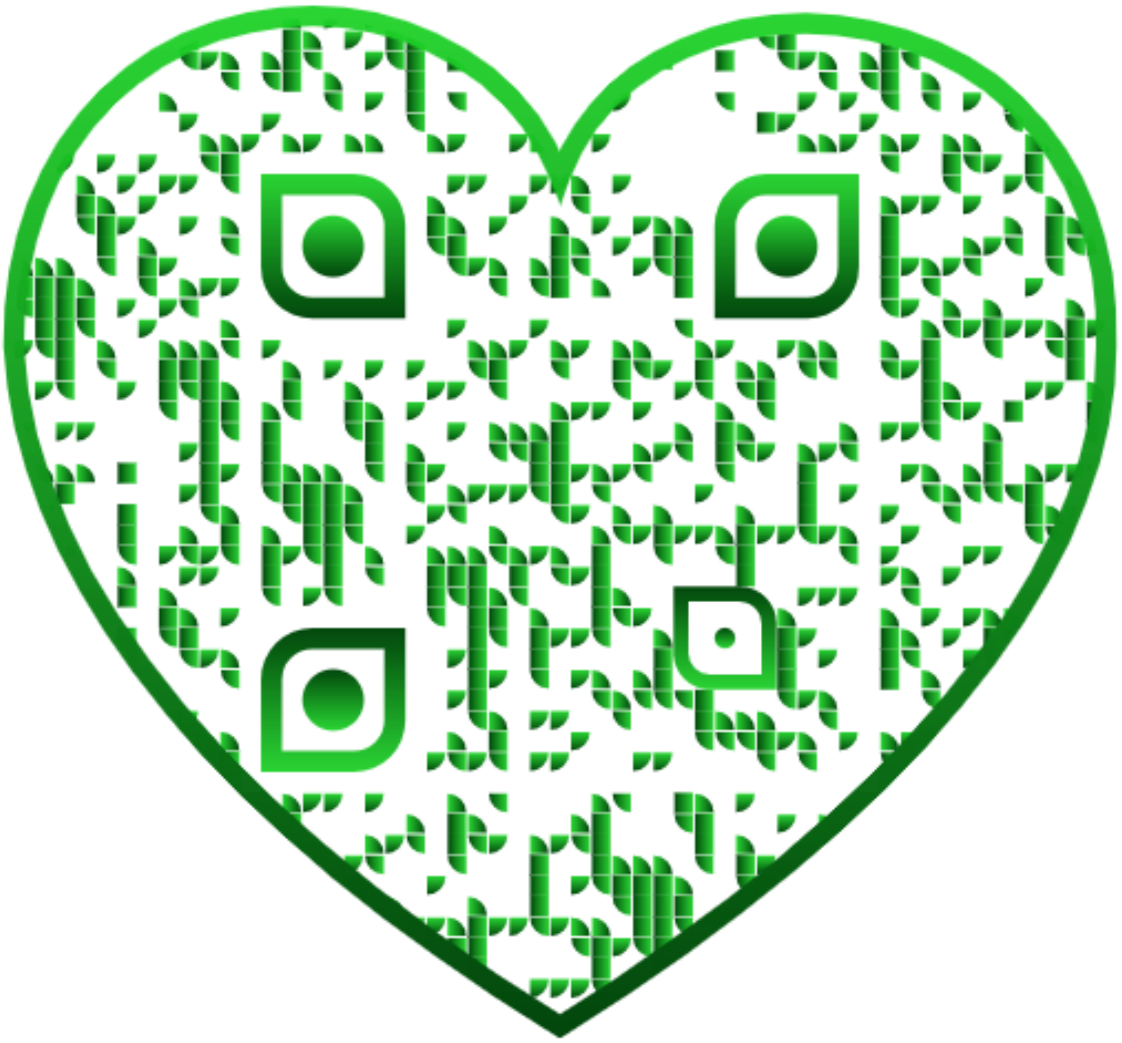

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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Many strands of rock music emanated from America's Southern States – the Delta blues, Nashville country music and Memphis rockabilly. But by the early Seventies and the emergence of liberal, progressive rock from California and the North East, the Old South had become synonymous with lynch mobs, bigotry and the Klan. However, the success of Delaney and Bonnie, Dr John, Leon Russell and Creedence Clearwater Revival helped establish an image of a New South attuned to the times.

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All that Glitters

Image and imagination ran riot in the glam-rock revolution

Marc Bolan traded his kaftan and acoustic guitar for glam glad-rags and a rabid teenage fan-following.

DESPITE ALL the media approval of progressive rock in the late Sixties, not everyone regarded it as reverentially. Many pop fans were alienated by the self-indulgent approach of leading progressive musicians and by the pretentious noise that often passed for innovation. However much the new rock may have pleased sixth formers and college students, it rarely found favour with the majority of the pop audience – the singles-buying teenagers, and in particular those under 14 who favoured precisely those qualities of showmanship, glamour and fun that the progressives scorned. By 1971, an assault on the progressive ethos and a return to more traditional pop values seemed long overdue. The 'glam-rock' movement provided the impetus for both.

The backlash began, ironically, with the steady rise to chart fame and teenybopper stardom of one of the early heroes of the British progressive scene, Marc Bolan of Tyrannosaurus Rex. With his background in male modelling and the mid-Sixties Mod scene, Bolan had always had a good nose for a gimmick and a strong understanding of the importance of image. His strange wailing voice and Tolkien-inspired pseudo-mystical songs won his two-man group (formed with fellow bohemian Steve Peregrine Took) a cult following and moderate album sales in the post-1967 period, but he became frustrated at their failure to expand further. In 1970, he made a quite deliberate bid for commercial success, dropping his acoustic guitar for an electric sound that was strongly influenced by Chuck Berry, and concentrating on singles. The records sold, initially, because they were good radio and dance discs, but spots on BBC-TV's 'Top Of The Pops' gave T.Rex a new kind of exposure and attracted screaming girls to their concerts for the first time.

All crazee now

Quite predictably, Bolan was accused by many former fans and colleagues of 'selling out' to commercialism. John Peel, the first to play Tyrannosaurus Rex records on the radio back in 1967, now refused to play them. Bolan remained unrepentant, telling one interviewer: 'I'm probably more ethnic now than I ever was, much more, because I'm more involved with the art of producing good funky energy rock music. I'm very aware of the people that I'm playing for now. Before I wasn't really sure who I was playing for.' Yet he was also just a little *too* aware for his own good, too calculating and manipulative in his stage act and far too garrulous on the subject of his own fame. He spoke candidly of the sexual nature of his appeal – 'the whole thing is a game of seduction between me and the audience . . . an orgiastic exercise,' he told Donald Zec of the *Daily Mirror*. 'I've sort of become a rock'n'roll James Dean.' But Bolan failed to recognise that his popularity was not sufficiently broadly based to last; the young teenage girls who formed the largest part of his audience soon moved on to other, prettier faces with a much more conventional 'boy-next-door' appeal, like Donny Osmond and David Cassidy.

Bolan was a catalyst, a trailblazer for the likes of Slade, Gary Glitter, Sweet and even David Bowie, who enjoyed his first sustained commercial exposure in 1972 following the release of his *Ziggy Stardust* album. Slade had been a professional band for years, working mainly in their native West Midlands, and had flirted briefly with the progressive scene before allowing manager Chas Chandler to promote them as a 'skinhead' band. The image worked against them at first because of the skinheads' reputation for violence, but it wasn't entirely misplaced: the band identified strongly with the more positive aspects of the sub-culture, its view of pop music as *dance* music, its tribal loyalties, its sense of teenage solidarity, its anti-intellectual stance. Their music came to express all these qualities, though it was not so much the skinheads as their younger brothers and sisters, working-class youngsters fresh into their teens, who provided Slade with their main following.

Costume capers

The kids came to Slade via television appearances, Radio One airplay and hit records, but the relationship between band and audience was cemented in live performance. From the start of their chart career, Slade *belonged* to their fans and identified with them in a way that Marc Bolan with his sequinned ego never could. At its simplest, Slade's audience identification found expression in the deliberately misspelled record titles – 'Look Wot You Dun', 'Gudbuy T'Jane', 'Take Me Bak 'Ome' and so on – which were designed to win the sympathy of every put-upon schoolkid. But their appeal went far deeper: in performance, they seemed to transmit and absorb pure teenage energy, making the gig itself a celebration of teenage community, letting the fans dictate the atmosphere.

Slade represented the 'good-time' aspect of glam-rock. Noddy Holder and guitarist Dave Hill dressed up to the nines in costumes that could have been borrowed from the set of *A Clockwork Orange*. Yet this was really all part of a shared joke with the fans, who, in their turn, lost no opportunity in dressing even more outrageously than their idols.

Glam-rock inevitably became a bandwagon for groups to jump on, fuelled by the huge boom in teen magazines and the big increase in singles sales that T.Rex and Slade encouraged. The approach of acts like Sweet, Chicory Tip, Wizzard and others was to find a halfway house between the ribaldry of Slade and the posturing of Bolan, but frequently the result was simply a camp parody. Gary Glitter made a feature out of camp, basing his act on the gaudiest aspects of Fifties rock'n'roll – hence the gold lamé suits, mock-Presley gyrations and, of course, the name. His discs had little in common with vintage rock, his one musical gimmick being a sparse, reverberating guitar sound over a familiar stomping beat, and his appeal was almost entirely visual; with each 'Top Of The Pops' appearance his clothing became more outlandish and his stage act more theatrical. If

Left, from top: Chicory Tip, middle-of-the-road glam-rockers who had a Number 1 hit with 'Son Of My Father'; Hot Chocolate, who shed their glam trappings to become pop veterans in the Eighties; the Sweet in Red Indian chic for a TV appearance; Slade playing to the gallery. Opposite: Gary's glittering prizes.

his image was laughable, it was meant to be.

Gary Glitter's real name was Paul Gadd; he had been around the UK pop scene for years, making periodic bids for stardom and failing every time. He was one of a number of faded or forgotten stars who found the climate of the early Seventies particularly favourable. In seeking to cater for the newly re-emergent teen market, the artists and the UK record industry could look back on their own past and put the lessons they had learned into practice. And when established acts weren't dipping into the past for ideas, newer stars were busy imitating their contemporaries. After Gary Glitter came Barry Blue, after Slade came Geordie, after the Faces came Nazareth. The Sweet, an unpretentious minor bubblegum group, rejigged their whole sound in homage to David Bowie – their 'Blockbuster', for instance, showed a remarkable similarity to 'The Jean Genie' – and feigned bisexuality, again in imitation of the master.

Glam and post-glam

Glam-rock strongly influenced the pop scene as a whole, even encouraging a new generation of groups with college-student appeal to rethink their attitude to image and stage presentation. Bowie, with his art and drama-school background, was especially important in this – his *Ziggy Stardust* show was rock theatre at its most powerful, while the album of the same name was itself a shrewd statement on the attractions and pressures of rock stardom. Bands such as Roxy Music, Mott the Hoople, Sparks, Cockney Rebel and Queen (who first appeared during 1974 with 'Seven Seas Of Rhye') all owed something to his initial breakthrough, while even Elton John, once marketed as a moody singer-songwriter, was inspired to don flamboyant costumes and cavort around his piano like a space-age Jerry Lee Lewis.

The glam-rock boom lasted well into 1975, with Mickie Most's RAK label having claimed an increasing share of the market with a series of manufactured teen acts. Significantly, it was an eight-week strike by 'Top Of The Pops' technicians in the middle of that year that signalled the beginning of the end. Denied their regular TV spots, Mud, Suzi Quatro, Slade and many others found their sales dropping alarmingly, and none quite recovered. During their absence from the screen, it became apparent that the kids were outgrowing their former idols and that the glitter-glam scene was fast losing its novelty value.

Glam-rock did nevertheless leave an important commercial legacy. It was the small labels like RAK, Magnet, UK and Bell who had espoused the trend wholeheartedly, and their success gave an early indication of the power of the independent label in the market-place. In addition, glam re-established the single as the unit currency of pop and the teenager as its prime consumer. It also had important repercussions visually, giving expression to the kind of ideas that Adam Ant, Gary Numan, Japan and a whole batch of 'new romantics' would explore anew at the beginning of the Eighties. Finally, as a trend peculiar to the United Kingdom, it marked the beginning of a widening schism between British and American tastes.

STEPHEN BARNARD

ROCK '71

1969 and 1970 had been dull years for teen-oriented pop. While the era of 'progressive' rock had brought with it a boom in album sales, few new stars had emerged to take advantage of the young singles-buying public. But 1971 was to mark the beginning of a pop revival as a fresh generation of teen idols began to assail the charts. In Britain, T.Rex scored the first of four Number 1 hits with 'Hot Love', while Slade began their remarkable run of Top Ten entries with 'Coz I Luv You'. Sweet, too, announced their arrival with 'Funny Funny' and for the next three years their releases – together with those of T.Rex, Slade and the glitter stars that followed in their wake – were to dominate the UK hit parade. In the States, meanwhile, the Osmonds (in all their permutations) and David Cassidy arrived to cater for teenage tastes.

On the rock front, the singer-songwriter trend continued to prevail. The outstanding success story of the year was Carole King, whose *Tapestry* album was greeted with unanimous critical acclaim and became the year's top-selling LP in the US, while James Taylor, Cat Stevens, Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell and Melanie also released best-sellers. And while such technical virtuosos as Emerson, Lake and Palmer, Led Zeppelin and newcomers Yes still dominated in the 'progressive' field, a new form of more theatrical rock – the 'decadent' school spearheaded by David Bowie, Roxy Music and Alice Cooper – was just around the corner.

January

9 'Grandad', a sentimental song by television actor Clive Dunn, reaches Number 1 in the UK.

15 George Harrison's 'My Sweet Lord' is released. The song borrows heavily from the Chiffons' 'He's So Fine', a hit in 1963, and Harrison is subsequently sued for plagiarism.

16 Aretha Franklin volunteers to stand bail of up to 250,000 dollars for Angela Davis, a black activist imprisoned in California and awaiting trial accused of supplying guns used in a robbery.

18 Eric Burdon and War appear at the Midem Festival in Cannes, France. Though they have been allotted 15 minutes, the band play on for over an hour and cause Elton John, who is due to follow them on stage, to depart in a rage.

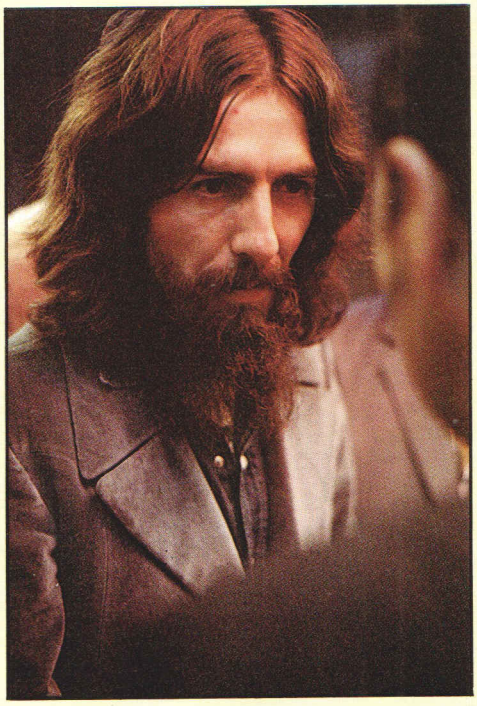
February

1 A riot breaks out at the Palais des Sports, Paris, during a concert featuring Iron Butterfly, Yes, Soft Machine, Gong and Kevin Ayers and the Whole World. During Ayers' set, members of the audience begin to bombard one another with bottles, causing the police to retaliate with tear gas.

6 Writing in the *Santa Barbara News Press*, rock critic Bill Hilton comments: 'Led Zeppelin has a rhythm that is unbeatable – plus one of the best girl singers in the business.'

13 The Osmonds reach Number 1 in the US with their first single, 'One Bad Apple'.

27 Paul McCartney's first solo single, 'Another Day', enters the UK Top Fifty. It later reaches Number 2.



Left: 'Dad's Army' star Clive Dunn made Number 1 with 'Grandad'. Above: Ex-Beatle George Harrison's 'My Sweet Lord' was a worldwide hit with unexpected repercussions. Above right: Diana Ross was 'Still Waiting' for her UK Number 1 to take off Stateside. Below: Eric Burdon and friends kept Elton John waiting – 'It's War!', said the pianist. Far right: Louis Armstrong departed this Wonderful World.

March
Carole King's *Tapestry* is released in the US and soon reaches the top of the album charts. By the end of 1973, the LP has sold over 12 million copies around the world, making it the highest-selling record ever by a female artist.
5 *Cry Of Love*, the last studio album to be recorded by Jimi Hendrix, is released.
7 Harold McNair, flautist and sax player with Donovan and Ginger Baker's Airforce, dies from lung cancer.
13 Iron Butterfly split up.

April
2 The Rolling Stones perform at London's Marquee Club for the shooting of the film *Ladies And Gentlemen The Rolling Stones*. The invited audience includes Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page.
Ringo Starr's 'It Don't Come Easy' is released. It becomes the former Beatle's first big hit, reaching Number 4 on both sides of the Atlantic and eventually selling over a million copies.
3 T.Rex are at Number 1 in the UK for the first time with 'Hot Love'.
24 Russ Ballard, guitarist with Argent, is rushed to hospital in Frankfurt after being electrocuted by a live microphone at the Zoom Club. He survives.

May
1 Fleetwood Mac replace guitarist Jeremy Spencer, who quit the group to join religious sect the Children of God, with American Bob Welch.
8 'The Battle Hymn Of Lieutenant Calley', by C Company featuring Terry Nelson, peaks in the US charts at Number 37. The record, a song in praise of Lieutenant William L. Calley, recently convicted for the premeditated murder of 22 Vietnamese at My Lai, is awarded a gold disc the following April.
Bill Graham, disillusioned with the current music scene, announces the closure of his Fillmore East and West venues. 'In the early days of both Fillmore East and West, the level of the audience seemed much higher in terms of musical sophistication,' he comments. 'Now there are too many screams for "more" with total disregard for whether or not there was any musical quality.'
12 Rolling Stone Mick Jagger marries Nicaraguan beauty Bianca Perez Moreno de Macias in St Tropez.

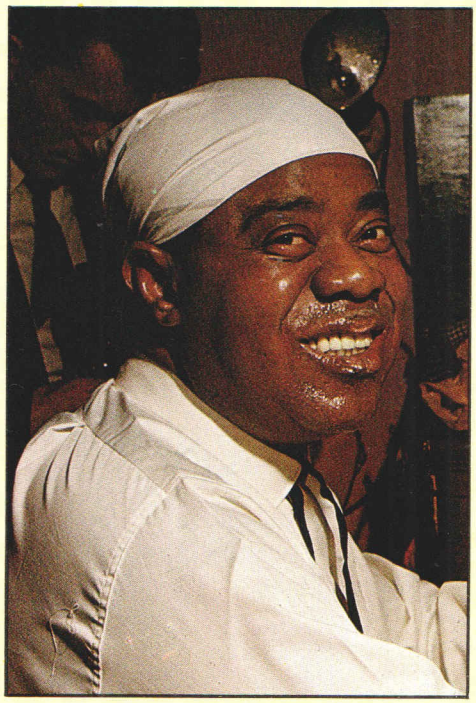
June
11 Rioting erupts at a Livingstone Taylor and Jethro Tull concert at the Red Rocks Amphitheatre, Denver. 24 people, including four policemen, are taken to hospital; 20 are arrested for drunkenness, weapons violation and narcotics charges.
26 The final show takes place at the Fillmore East. The star-studded bill includes the Allman Brothers, the J. Geils Band, the Beach Boys, Country Joe and the Fish and Edgar Winter's White Trash.

July
3 Jim Morrison, singer with the Doors, is found dead in a bathtub by his wife Pamela while on holiday in Paris.
The Newport Folk Festival comes to a premature close when hundreds of youths run amok, causing thousands of dollars' worth of damage to equipment and seating.
6 Jazzman Louis Armstrong dies in New Orleans aged 71.

August
1 The Concert For Bangladesh, organised by George Harrison, takes place at New York's Madison Square Garden. Performers include Harrison, Ravi Shankar, Billy Preston, Eric Clapton, Leon Russell, Badfinger, Ringo Starr and Bob Dylan.
3 Paul McCartney announces that he is forming a touring band named Wings.
13 Sax player King Curtis is stabbed to death in New York.
21 Diana Ross reaches the top of the UK singles charts with 'I'm Still Waiting'; in the US, however, the song can only make Number 63.

September
4 At a Wishbone Ash concert in Texas, Francisco Carrasco, a sandwich vendor, is murdered.
21 'The Old Grey Whistle Test', a show devoted to 'serious' rock music, is aired for the first time on BBC television.
25 Guitarist and singer Peter Frampton announces his departure from Humble Pie.
30 Keyboard player Rick Wakeman makes his performing debut with Yes at Leicester's De Montfort Hall.

October
1 John Lennon is awarded a gold disc for US sales of *Imagine* on the eve of its UK release.
9 Chicago's *At Carnegie Hall*, the first four-album set to be released by a rock group, appears. Despite the hefty price tag, it soon sells over a million copies.
12 Rock'n'roll legend Gene Vincent dies at the age of 36 in California.
29 Guitarist Duane Allman of the Allman Brothers is killed in a motorcycle accident near his home in Macon, Georgia.

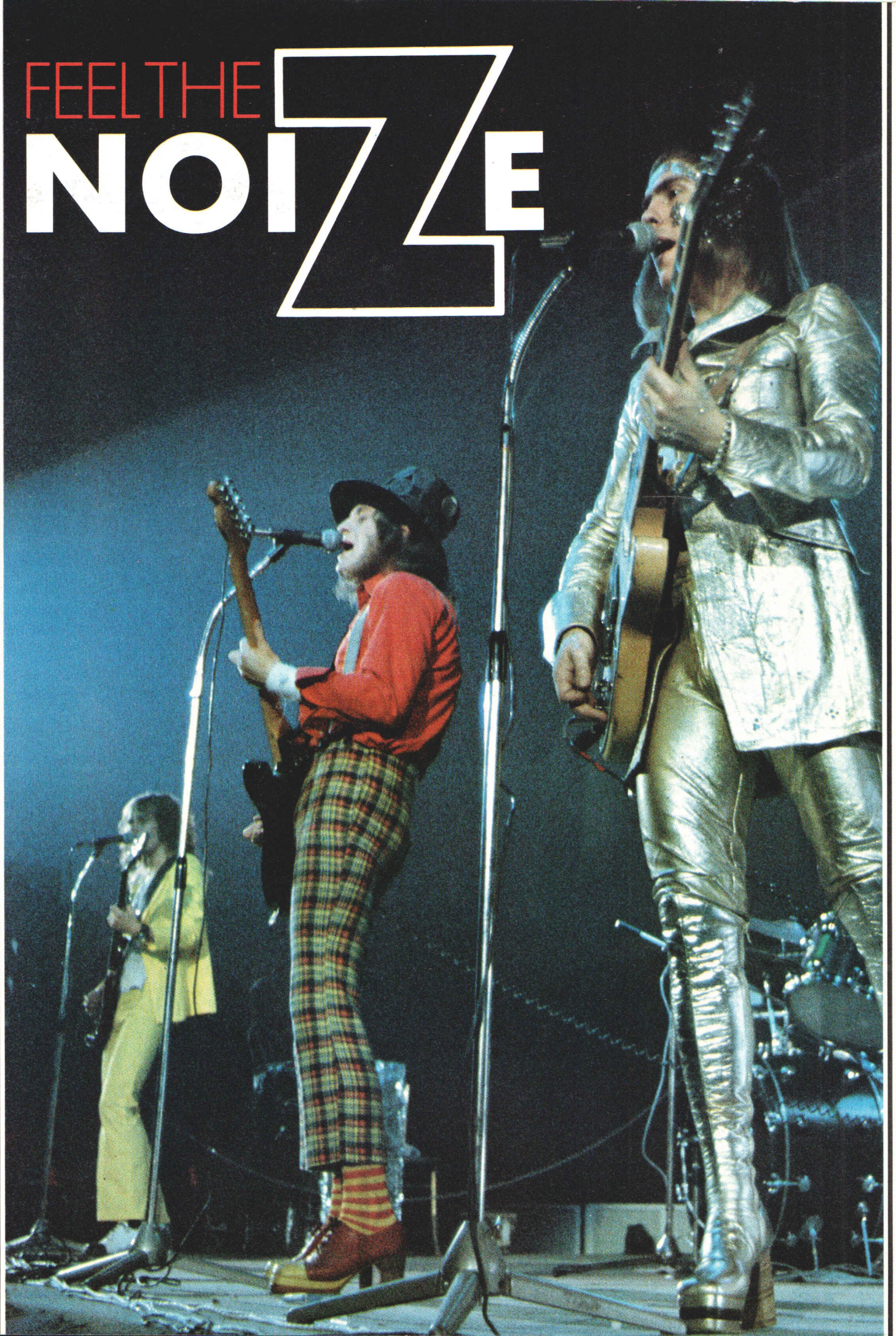


November
8 Led Zeppelin's fourth album, with its unusual 'title' of four rune-like symbols, is released.
13 'Coz I Luv You', by Wolverhampton stompers Slade, reaches Number 1 in the UK, beginning an incredible run of twelve consecutive Top Five hits.
17 The Frank Zappa film *200 Motels* is premiered at the London Pavilion.
18 Herman 'Little Junior' Parker, blues harpist and singer, and writer of the Elvis Presley classic 'Mystery Train', dies while undergoing a brain operation in Chicago.

December
10 Frank Zappa is attacked by a fan's jealous husband as the Mothers of Invention are playing a concert at London's Rainbow Theatre; the singer/guitarist falls from the stage and breaks a leg.
11 John Lennon and Yoko Ono appear at a benefit concert for John Sinclair in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Sinclair, manager of the MC5 and leader of the radical White Panthers party, is in prison on drugs charges.
25 Comedian Benny Hill's humorous song 'Ernie (The Fastest Milkman In The West)' is Number 1 in the UK, while Melanie's 'Brand New Key' tops the US charts.
31 The Band perform at the New York Academy of Music; the concert is recorded for the double album *Rock Of Ages*.

TOM HIBBERT, JENNY DAWSON

FEEL THE NOIZE



How Slade stomped their way to the top

'THE FANS are fed up with paying to sit on their hands while watching musicians who clearly couldn't care less about the customers.' Thus commented Slade's singer Noddy Holder in 1971. 'What is wanted is more of a party atmosphere.' And that is exactly what Slade provided, with a brash, vulgar, loud and cheery sound untainted by any hint of subtlety. Along with T.Rex, Sweet and the other glitter stars, Slade spearheaded the teen pop revival of the early Seventies; but whereas the appeal of their contemporaries was restricted largely to female teenage consumers, Slade attracted a wider following.

Unlike the vast majority of their rivals, their image was based not on effete sexuality and lip-gloss but on a warm-hearted, boozy 'working-class' fellowship: at a Slade concert, the sound of adolescent screams would be drowned beneath that of football-terrace chants and stomping boots. The group's good-time music was raw, crude and simplistic – music not for listening to but for shouting with and waving scarves at – and between 1971 and 1974, it provided Slade with 12 consecutive UK Top Ten entries (six of them Number 1 hits) and three Number 1 albums, making them commercially the most successful British act of their time.

Black country rock

Neville 'Noddy' Holder was born in Wolverhampton on 15 June 1950 and formed his first group, the Rockin' Phantoms, while still at school. The band were little more than an amateur R&B combo but they were young and keen, and so when singer and Midlands celebrity Steve Brett lost the services of his backing group in 1965, he replaced them with Holder's outfit. The Rockin' Phantoms thus became the Mavericks.

Meanwhile, guitarist Dave Hill (born Devon, 4 April 1952) and drummer Don Powell (born Wolverhampton, 10 September 1950) were playing in another youthful Wolverhampton-based band, the 'N Betweens, along with Johnny Howells (vocals), Mickey Marston (guitar) and Dave Jones (bass). The 'N Betweens also played R&B – but not very well – and, late in 1965, Jones quit the group following an argument concerning his musical ability (or lack of it). The band held auditions for a replacement and Jimmy Lea proved to be the successful candidate.

Lea (born Wolverhampton, 14 June 1952) was already an accomplished musician. He had begun to study the violin at the age of seven and had played with the Stafford Youth Orchestra for three years before taking up the bass guitar.

Soon after Lea's recruitment to the 'N Betweens, Mickey Marston followed Jones out of the band and Noddy Holder, bored with playing Jim Reeves and Roy Orbison numbers behind Steve Brett's crooning, came in on second guitar. And when Howells also departed in April 1966, Holder, with his hoarse, grating and sturdy voice, took over on vocals.

The 'N Betweens were by now gigging regularly around the Black Country and points beyond. They had rejected R&B for an odd mixture of soul – Otis Redding and Motown – together with rock oddities such as Moby Grape's 'Omaha' and Procol Harum's 'The Milk Of Human Kindness', which all received hard-rock arrangements and, unusually for the time, twin lead guitars. In the summer of 1966, the group were playing at Tiles Club in

Slade attracted hostile attention for their skinhead look (above), but their image later mellowed (opposite).

London's Oxford Street before an enthusiastically bopping crowd when they were spotted by American producer and pop manipulator Kim Fowley. 'He came in the dressing room and he was totally over the top – a real freak,' Holder recalled in 1983. 'He did the usual thing, saying "You guys are the most original band I've ever seen. I'm gonna make you guys stars." But he actually followed it up. The next day he took us walking round London and he's taken us into the bank with him to cash a cheque and he'd say to the bank teller: "Look at these four guys' faces. One day they're gonna be stars. And don't forget – Kim Fowley was the first to tell you."'

Fowley took the 'N Betweens to Regent Sound studios in Denmark Street where they recorded two numbers, 'You Better Run', a US hit for the Young Rascals, and 'Evil Witchman' which, according to Holder, was 'some song that Fowley ripped off someone and wrote some stupid new words to.' With a potential single in the can, Fowley negotiated a one-off deal with Columbia and 'You Better Run' was released in August 1966. It sold reasonably well, particularly in the group's native Midlands, but it failed to chart and the Kim Fowley connection was severed.

Bad news in the Bahamas

Still without a long-term contract, the 'N Betweens continued to gig throughout 1967, and the following year their agency secured them a six-week residency at a club in the Bahamas. Unfortunately, the club went out of business five weeks into the engagement, was taken over and the group were forced to stay on until they had paid off a massive hotel bill and could afford to ship their equipment home. For a further two months, the 'N Betweens played at the club seven nights a week backing fire-eaters, limbo dancers, strippers and third-rate soul singers. But the experience did have its advantages, for the musicians were still not writing original material and in the Bahamas they heard records that had never been heard in England – numbers like the Amboy Dukes' 'Journey To The Centre Of Your Mind', Nazz's 'Open My Eyes' and Steppenwolf's 'Born To Be Wild' – which they incorporated into their act.

Back in England towards the end of 1968, the group's agent obtained them an audition with Fontana Records. The label's head, Jack Bavistock, was highly impressed with the sound and offered them a deal. Bavistock wasn't so impressed with the band's name, however, and proffered an alternative. It was as Ambrose Slade that the group's first album was released in April 1969. *Beginnings* was composed largely of cover versions – songs by Jeff Lynne, Frank Zappa, the Moody Blues and the Beatles – although the single lifted from the LP, 'Genesis', was a group-composed instrumental.

Both album and single flopped, but they did at least catch the attention of London agent John Gunnell who took ex-Animal Chas Chandler to see Ambrose Slade performing at Rasputin's club. Chandler had recently stopped managing Jimi Hendrix and was on the lookout for fresh talent – and the enthusiasm of the audience and the vitality of the group convinced him that he'd found it. Chandler signed the band to a management deal, shortened

their name to Slade and produced their next single, 'Wild Winds Are Blowing'.

The record was another failure, but by now Slade were attracting a good deal of media attention – much of it hostile – because of the new image they had adopted. Searching for a look that would single them out from the long-haired, loon-panted masses, the members of Slade had cropped their hair, donned braces and 'bovver' boots and gone skinhead. Associations with skinhead violence led to cancelled bookings and a backlash in the music press – but it also led to TV interviews and national press coverage.

Suddenly, Slade were mildly notorious, and when their next single, a version of Mann and Weil's 'Shape Of Things To Come', emerged in March 1970, the band were invited to appear on BBC-TV's 'Top Of The Pops'. The exposure failed to assist sales of the record, however, and by the time their third single, 'Know Who You Are' (which was 'Genesis' with an added lyric), had flopped in September, the group had rejected the skinhead look and were growing their hair once more.

Boots for dancing

By 1971, the Slade controversy (and hence the band itself) had been forgotten by the media. But then in June, 'Get Down And Get With It' – a version of a song by New Orleans singer Bobby Marchan performed in raucous, relentless, stomping fashion – entered the UK Top Twenty, reaching Number 16. Despite lack of airplay, Slade had finally come up with a hit.

It was now that Chas Chandler insisted that the group start writing their own material. All that was lacking was self-confidence, he argued – and Jim Lea and Noddy Holder soon proved him right. 'Once we finally got down to it, "Coz I Luv You" came like a piece of cake,' Holder has said. 'It was just a jamming beat written in half an hour and to make it different – more *us* – we put stomping boot sounds all over it.'

In November 1971, 'Coz I Luv You', an infectious plodder dominated by Lea's electric violin and Holder's rasping tones, made the UK Number 1 position and established the formula that would keep Slade at the top for the next three years. It was a simple formula but a thoroughly effective one: a stomping rhythm, noise, jollity and immediate riffs, misspelled song titles and a garish image.

Spelling success

The formula proved more successful than Slade or Chandler could have ever imagined. 'Look Wot You Dun', the follow-up to 'Coz I Luv You', reached Number 4 in February 1972; 'Take Me Bak 'Ome' and 'Mama Weer All Crazee Now' both made the top slot; 'Gudbuy T'Jane' reached Number 2 and in March 1973 'Cum On Feel The Noize' entered the charts at Number 1. Meanwhile, the band were proving equally successful in the album market; *Slade Alive*, released in April 1972, climbed to Number 2, while *Slayed?* (1972) and *Sladest* (1973) both topped the LP charts.

The sound of Slade's pop chants echoed around drunken parties, football terraces, pubs at closing time and the concert halls of Britain, where the group were still gigging constantly. By the time they provided the country with its anthem for Christmas 1973, 'Merry Xmas Everybody', Slade had become a national institution.

Something had to give, however, and the end of 1974 brought with it signs of decline. For after an unbroken sequence of 12 Top Ten hits, the group were feeling the need to expand their boundaries – and so they made a movie. *Slade In Flame* ('the nitty gritty, behind-the-scenes story about your average rock'n'roll band,' according to Noddy Holder) was, as rock films go, a commendable effort. However, Slade were supposed to be a *people's* band, working-class and down to earth; in trying to become movie stars they were alienating a proportion of their audience.

In 1975, they lost more fans by embarking on a concerted and lengthy effort to 'break' the United States, where they had never found success. When they returned to Britain two years later, having failed in their mission, the group found that they had been all but forgotten. Punk had brought with it a new generation of 'people's bands' and Slade were now has-beens and definitely unhip. An album released in March 1977 was wryly titled *Whatever Happened To Slade?*.

Back to the roots

Slade still had energy to spare, however, and the will to play and win; for the next three years they toured ceaselessly around clubs and even pubs, slowly rebuilding grass-roots support. Then in the summer of 1980, the band were booked, at the last minute, to appear at the Reading Festival – and their rowdy, barnstorming set turned out to be the event's sensation. Slade were as raucous, rude and hyperactive as ever and while Dave Hill's screeching guitar added an element that appealed to the heavy-metal contingent, the group was otherwise devoid of the strutting pomp of most other acts on the heavy metal-oriented bill. Warmth and humour were, as always, in evidence.

A live EP of their festival performance, *Slade Alive At Reading*, entered the UK Top Fifty at the end of the year and the band continued to work into the Eighties, attracting a growing following of denim-jacketed youths and older fans re-converted to the cause. With gutsily euphoric workouts of the hits, jovial, crowd-stirring yells from Holder, utterly tasteless, high-volume guitar from Hill and rampant audience participation all round, Slade's live performances (captured on the 1982 album *Slade On Stage*) had become, if anything, more vibrant than they had been a decade earlier. And although it seemed unlikely that they could ever regain the mass adulation and commercial success of old, Slade – on stage at least – proved that there was still room in the hearts of many for a mindless party, a beery sing-along and a stomping binge.

TOM HIBBERT

Mama Weer All Crazee Now: Breezy bearers of bonhomie and bluster (above), Slade made their mark with infectious dance-hall stomps and crazy antics (below). Below left: Noddy Holder surveys his flying circus.

Slade
Recommended Listening

Sladest (Polydor 2442 119) (Includes: Get Down And Get With It, Coz I Luv You, Take Me Bak 'Ome, Mama Weer All Crazee Now, Gudbuy T'Jane, Cum On Feel The Noize, Skweeze Me Pleeze Me).

LEADER OF

Gary Glitter: a success story in sequins

SUCCESS – particularly in the fad-conscious world of pop music – often depends on being in the right place at the right time. Paul Gadd's musical career began in the Fifties and had spanned 12 years of performing in clubs (and the release of a number of unsuccessful singles) before the emergence of glam-rock in Britain in the early Seventies catapulted him to stardom in the guise of Gary Glitter. He sustained a rigorous publicity campaign during his heyday, ensuring that the sparkle did not fade before he had emblazoned his sequinned pseudonym across the pages of rock history. Glam-rock was as much about image as music; Gary Glitter's musical legacy amounts to a mere handful of singles, but his outrageous persona and lavish stage act remain memorable.

He was born in the small town of Banbury in Oxfordshire, and gives his date of birth as 8 May 1944. One of the first musical influences in his young life was his Uncle John, who performed in clubs and pubs, accompanying himself on his guitar. While in his early teens, Gary gained his second major influence – Elvis Presley – on a visit to the local cinema to see *Loving You* (1957).

The youngster returned every day for a week, perfecting his impersonation of the King in front of a mirror with a tennis racquet. When his teachers asked him what he wanted to be after he left school, he answered without hesitation: 'A rock 'n'roll star'.

He saved up for a white Hofner Senator guitar by selling newspapers and formed a skiffle group before adopting his stepfather's name of Russell to front a school rock band, Paul Russell and the Rebels. By the age of 13, he was earning up to £45 a week singing nightly; his venues included the Safari Club in London's Trafalgar Square and the 2 Is coffee bar in Old Compton Street, where he rubbed shoulders with the likes of Adam Faith and Bruce Welch of the Shadows.

Shopping for clothes

Even at that age, Gary had no difficulty deciding what to spend his money on – clothes. He would turn up at school in the latest Italian fashions – pointed leather shoes and 'bum-freezer' jackets. The 'in' place to shop for clothes then was Al Kazura (later Johnson's) on the King's Road, Chelsea, from whom he later commissioned his extravagant glitter costumes.

Leaving school at 14, Gary worked for a week in a theatre-ticket agency before deciding to concentrate solely on his musical career. Fronting his first pro band – Paul Raven and the Vibraphones – as vocalist, he dropped guitar because it restricted his movement on stage. He toured in 1960 and 1961 as a bottom-of-the-bill singer, doing Buddy Holly covers, with a show that included comedians Bernard Bresslaw and Ronnie Corbett. Then came his first venture onto vinyl when he was spotted by film-producer Robert Hartford Davis. He became Gary's first manager, and shortly afterwards the Decca label released 'Alone In The Night', a pop ballad in a minor key, with which the singer made his TV debut in 'Cool For Cats'. Two further singles for Parlophone under his second manager Vic Billings were equally unsuccessful.

Then Gary's talent for involving the audience in his stage act, persuading them to sing and clap when required, landed him the job of warm-up man on the TV show 'Ready, Steady, Go!'. He was in the right place for meeting the right people, and one of these was Mike Leander, a prominent songwriter and producer who had worked with many top names and was to become Gary's main collaborator during the Glitter years. But first came an interlude in Germany, when Gary formed a band with John Russell, later to become the sax

THE GANG

On stage, Gary Glitter was a larger than life performer . . . but the sequin-laden trousers of his tailor-made suit were a little on the small side.

and trombone player with the Glitter Band. With the Merseybeat invasion in full swing in Britain, they decided to follow the Beatles' lead and head for Germany to serve their apprenticeship on the club circuit in Hamburg.

The glamour game

By 1971 a new craze was sweeping the commercial music scene back in England – glam-rock. The time was right for a novelty act with the right ingredients to break into the charts. Sitting around with a group of friends one night, the singer dreamt up a list of suitably alliterative names, eventually settling on Gary Glitter.

Gary had remained in touch with Mike Leander while in Germany and, on his return to the UK, the duo teamed up to record 'Rock And Roll (Parts One And Two)' for Bell Records. The formula was a neat one: to a basic drum rhythm were added simple, catchy riffs and easily memorable, repetitive lyrics, with plenty of shouting and handclapping to ensure maximum audience participation at a live performance. It stripped rock music back down to the bare bones.

The rock audience of the late Sixties had veered towards underground bands and the record-buying public had become increasingly album-oriented. But the typical teenage pop music fan's pocket-money did not stretch to LPs, and there was a gap in the singles market. After the protest songs of the Sixties, the introspection of the singer-songwriters and heavy rock, the early Seventies heralded a return to sheer fun in pop music – bopping songs to play at parties and discos.

However, 'Rock And Roll' was by no means an instant chart success for Gary Glitter. It had the kids on their feet in the discos, but it took four months for it to get radio airplay. The record reached Number 2 in the UK and Number 7 in the US, but it was the B-side – with sporadic shouts and handclaps over the backing track – that was listed as the hit. Eventually, it sold over three million copies, won Gary his first gold disc and a songwriting award (he co-wrote the song with Leander).

After years as a warm-up man and small-time performer, success had come at last. But in the competitive glam-rock field of the early Seventies, he could not afford to rest on his laurels. Subtlety was not a word to be given much consideration; to outshine the other acts, Glitter had to push the image to the verge of parody – more camp, more sparkles, more make-up, more hair-spray, more inches on the platform shoes, more sequins and lurex. Meanwhile, he confirmed his hit formula with the release of 'I Didn't Know I Loved You (Till I Saw You Rock'n'Roll)', a UK Number 4 hit that was unashamedly cloned from its predecessor.

Rest in peace?

From appearing at the Rock'n'Roll Revival concert at Wembley Stadium in the summer of 1972 alongside Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis, Gary Glitter kept up the momentum with a breathless tour schedule covering concert halls all over Britain, Europe and Australia. As a publicity stunt in 1973, he took a boat out onto the River Thames and lowered a coffin into the water; it contained photos and discs of Paul Raven and the ceremony, attended by DJ Alan Freeman, represented Glitter's symbolic burial of his old image. He went on to perform at the Rainbow and at the London Palladium – for the latter, Bell Records flew 10 American underground rock journalists, at a cost of 10,000 dollars, to see him.

In a review in *Rolling Stone* in March 1973, Paul Gambaccini described the event: '"My God, it's Marlene Dietrich!" exclaimed one of the 10 as the star slinked

down a golden staircase in a black robe and plumage-covered hat. Glitter flung the robe aside and proceeded to moan and gyrate through an hour of thump-thump-thump rock'n'roll. "Do you want to touch?" Glitter asked the shrieking girls. Then he gave them "Do You Wanna Touch Me (Oh Yeah)", complete with pelvic thrusts and robot-like movements, occasionally turning his back on the throng to readjust the zipper on his pants.'

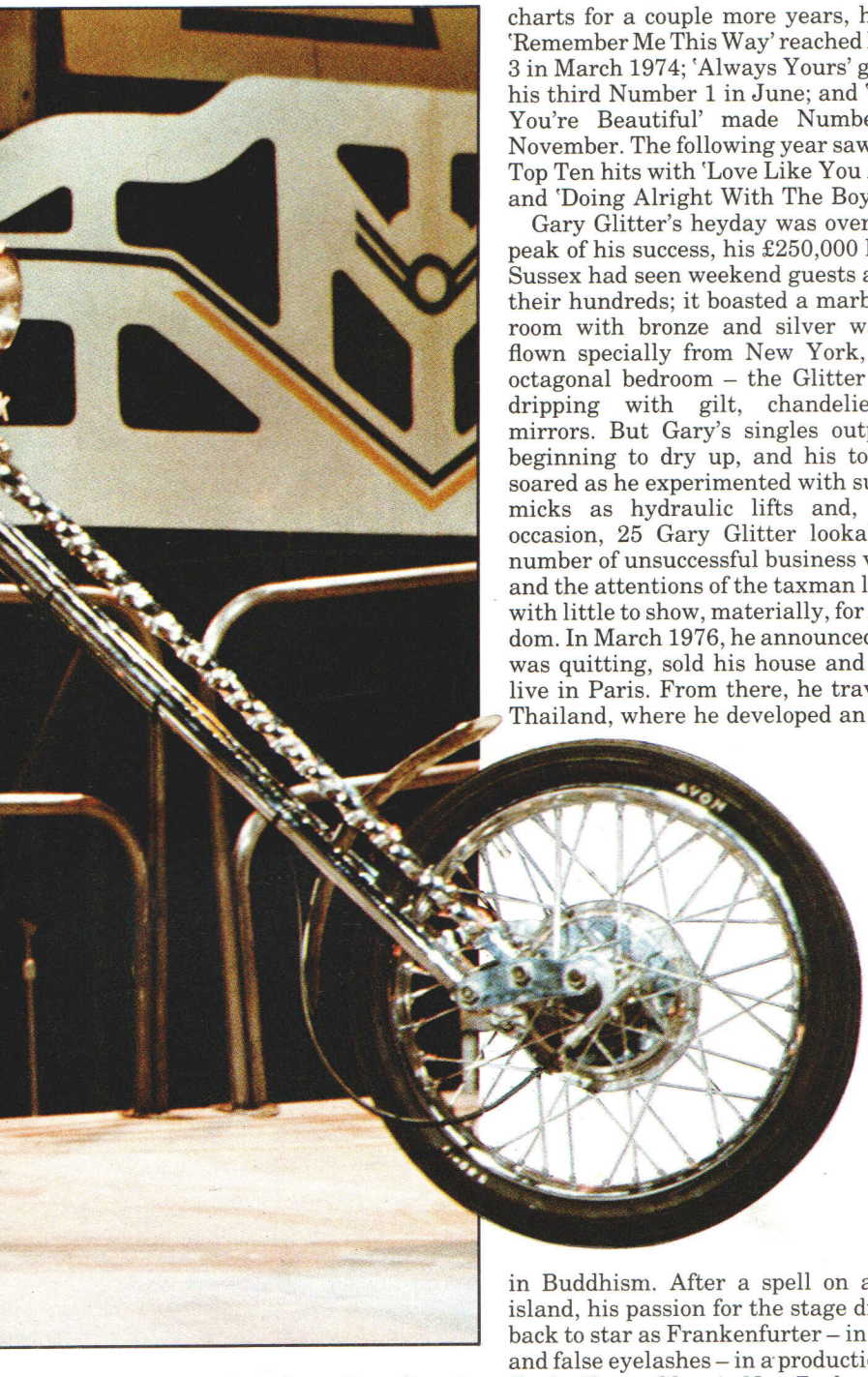
The staircase had been rented from Pinewood Studios for Gary's elaborate set; he had to be hoisted to the top of it to make his dramatic entrance, tottering on his nine-inch platform shoes. His performance of 'I'm The Leader Of The Gang (I Am!)' was equally spectacular, employing up to eight motorbikes as stage props. A busy promotions and publicity team saturated the media with material, while his fan club cut up his old glitter suits to post snippets to his followers. Gary rehearsed his stage act with fanatical enthusiasm, right down to perfecting the knack of raising one eyebrow to stare quizzically at the audience, one of his many self-parodying gestures.

Behind him, his band had developed a basic leg-stepping routine. John Russell was still with Gary on sax and trombone; the rest of the band comprised Harvey Ellison (also on sax), Gerry Shephard (guitar), John Springate (bass) and Pete Phipps and Peter Gill on drums. In 1973 Tony Leonard replaced Peter Gill, who went on to join Saxon. The Glitter Band were to register seven UK Top Twenty hits under their own name – including a 1975 Number 2 with 'Goodbye My Love' – in the early and mid Seventies before finally splitting in 1977.

Above: Gary rode the charts in the glitter era, towering above his fellow glam-rockers. Inset above left: Gary's first professional photo as Paul Raven. Opposite: Glitter gets down on stage.

Platinum productions

Gary Glitter had 11 Top Ten hit singles in the UK between June 1972 and July 1975. 1973 was his most prolific year: two Number 2 hits with 'Do You Wanna Touch Me (Oh Yeah)' and 'Hello Hello I'm Back Again' preceded his first chart-topper in July with the playground chant 'I'm The Leader Of The Gang (I Am!)', which sold a million worldwide. Its success was topped, however, by 'I Love You Love Me Love' in November when this slower-paced but equally persistent song entered the charts at Number 1 to register his third million-

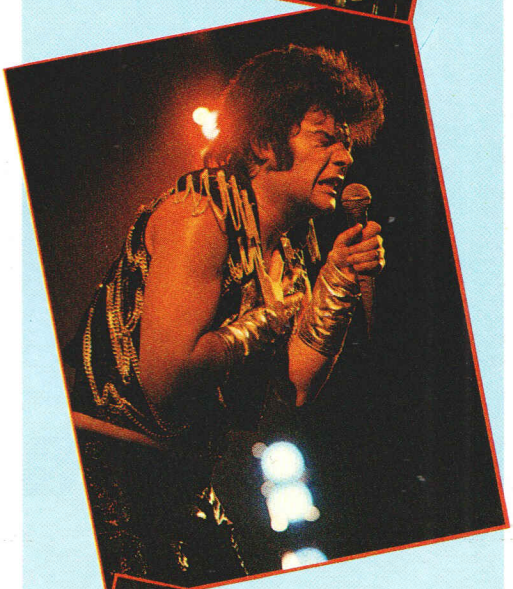


seller. Gary picked up four silver discs in 1973; the following year he became the first British artist to be awarded a platinum record by the British Phonograph Society, and by the end of 1975 he had sold 18 million records. In addition to his successful singles, he released four albums and a hit compilation.

But the diamante on the glam-rock bandwagon had already begun to tarnish. In December 1973, Marc Bolan had declared: 'Glam-rock is dead . . . it was a great thing but now you have your Sweet, Chicory Tip and Gary Glitter . . . what those guys are doing is circus and comedy.' New fads were taking a grip on the fickle pop audience – notably the Monkees-mould Bay City Rollers, whose tartan-and-terraces image was upstaging the glitter and eyeshadow. Gary managed to ride the charts for a couple more years, however: 'Remember Me This Way' reached Number 3 in March 1974; 'Always Yours' gave him his third Number 1 in June; and 'Oh Yes! You're Beautiful' made Number 2 in November. The following year saw his last Top Ten hits with 'Love Like You And Me' and 'Doing Alright With The Boys'.

Gary Glitter's heyday was over. At the peak of his success, his £250,000 house in Sussex had seen weekend guests arrive in their hundreds; it boasted a marble bathroom with bronze and silver wallpaper flown specially from New York, and an octagonal bedroom – the Glitter Suite – dripping with gilt, chandeliers and mirrors. But Gary's singles output was beginning to dry up, and his tour costs soared as he experimented with such gimmicks as hydraulic lifts and, on one occasion, 25 Gary Glitter lookalikes. A number of unsuccessful business ventures and the attentions of the taxman left Gary with little to show, materially, for his stardom. In March 1976, he announced that he was quitting, sold his house and went to live in Paris. From there, he travelled to Thailand, where he developed an interest in Buddhism. After a spell on a Pacific island, his passion for the stage drew him back to star as Frankenfurter – in fishnets and false eyelashes – in a production of the *Rocky Horror Show* in New Zealand, and to attempt a series of comebacks.

In the late Seventies and early Eighties, Glitter sustained an avid following on the college circuit in Britain and played to a full house at London's Venue at Christmas 1982 – still revamping the old glam rags and glitter. He released cover versions of Crystals and Ronettes hits, toured Australia again and appeared on radio and TV shows. Meanwhile, in the States, his songs crept back into the charts with Joan Jett's cover of 'Do You Wanna Touch Me (Oh Yeah)'. The enthusiasm of the old trouper seemed hard to quell; perhaps rock'n'roller Little Richard's self-accolade could be pinned equally well to Gary Glitter's spangled breast: 'I'm just the same as ever – loud, electrifying and full of personal magnetism.' ANNETTE KENNERLEY



Gary Glitter
Recommended Listening

Gary Glitter's Golden Greats (GTO GTLP 021) (Includes: Rock And Roll Part One, Hello Hello I'm Back Again, I'm The Leader Of The Gang (I Am!), I Love You Love Me Love, Do You Wanna Touch Me (Oh Yeah), Oh Yes! You're Beautiful).

Rock steps forward in different styles

ROCK FASHIONS start at the feet upwards. Whatever clothes fans have opted for, their choice of footwear has always been the most conspicuous indicator of their taste, style and musical allegiances. This may be simply because feet are especially 'eloquent' in dancing to rock – but shoe-power probably resides in the *symbolic* importance of footwear: bovver boots, for example, represent skinhead aggression; pixie boots represent new romantic pea-cockery. Moreover, shoes have always been a sign of rock's unwillingness to conform.

Breaking step . . .

When Elvis Presley warned his fans not to step on his blue suede shoes, he was doing more than merely stating his sartorial standards. Those powder-blue shoes signalled a break away from traditional male footwear which, no matter how flamboyant the rest of a performer's outfit might be, tended towards practicality and classic, conservative lines. Women had long suffered for the sake of fashion – teetering on spindly stilettos to turn a shapely ankle – but men's feet had been blessed with comparative kindness by footwear trends.

In the late Fifties, Jerry Lee Lewis would plump for a pair of handmade two-tone Oxfords – or 'co-respondents' as they were called in the Thirties, while Chuck Berry, even in the late Sixties, would complement his stylish appearance with real crocodile shoes. The Teddy Boy look in the Fifties had sparked off an interest in more adventurous styles of footwear, with ever more far-reaching points to the winkle-pickers. In the Sixties, the elastic-sided Chelsea 'Beatle' boots oddly combined with the new thin trouser leg. The higher heel now returned to men's shoes – for the first time since the eighteenth century.

The utterly clothes-conscious Mods made a number of new shoe styles fashionable. Buckles and side laces came in, the snub-toed winklepickers or 'chisels' came and went, Hush Puppies were favourites with both sexes (they were considered good to dance in), as were Clarks' desert boots, running shoes and even bowling shoes. Raoul shoe shop in London's Carnaby Street was *the* place to buy your shoes.

Shaw footed

Feet were often overlooked when pop stars dressed for performances, however. Even a dedicated follower of fashion like Ray Davies of the Kinks would wear a non-descript pair of 'brothel creepers' – suede lace-up ankle-huggers – with a snazzy red tartan suit. Some stars have made an impact by complete non-conformity – Sandie Shaw became famous for appearing bare-foot. Women's footwear seems to adhere to the rest of their stage image – the Supremes had to complete their slinky,

glamorous outfits with high-heeled, strappy shoes; Lulu closed the gap between her mini skirts and the floor with white knee-length boots; and Tina Turner added inches to her stage presence with towering platform sling-backs.

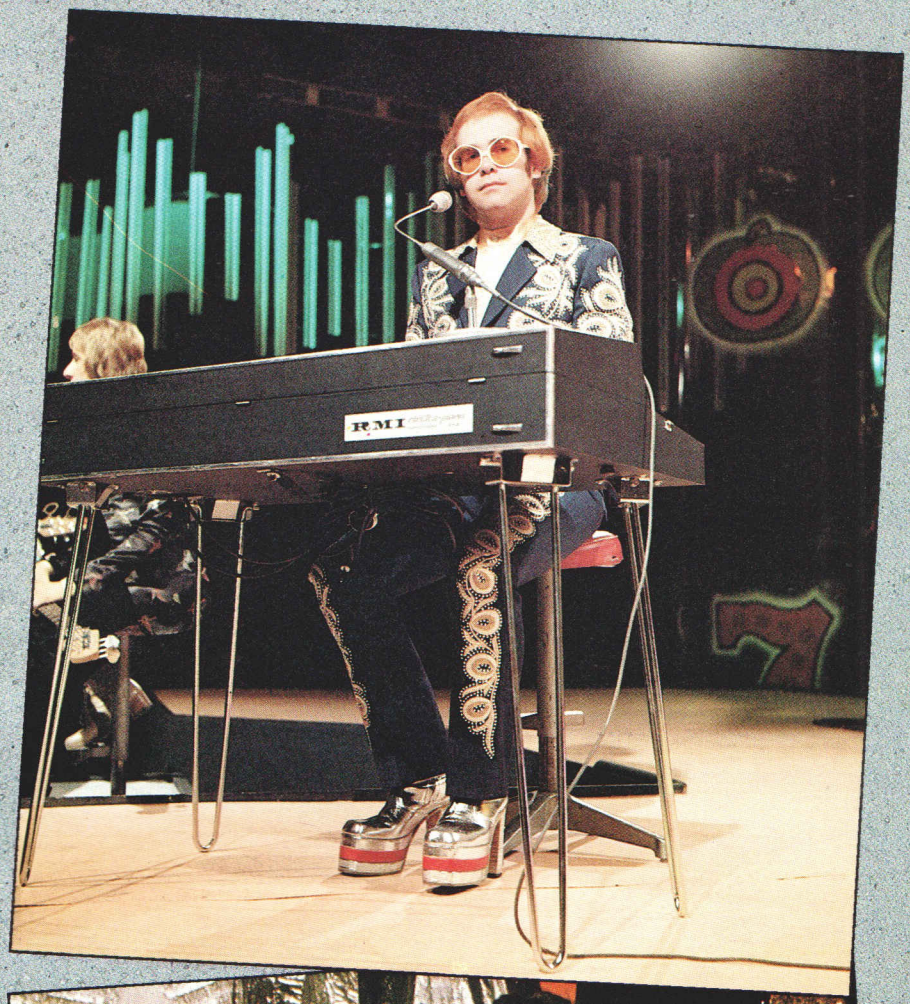
The hippie movement brought a more relaxed fashion to rock music in the late Sixties. In the States, there was a reaction against the commercial aspects of the promotion business, which involved the hyping of mediocre performers, restyling their looks with appropriate clothing. Many 'rebel' rock artists donned their oldest clothes and scuffed sneakers. Leather-thonged sandals, 'Jesus' boots and – in a more ethnic style – moccasins were also popular. For an extravagant look, some performers – Captain Beefheart, for instance – would have shoes and boots handmade for them, in soft, coloured leathers, with appliquéd motifs, or cowboy boots with elaborate top-stitching decorations scrolled on the sides.

Height of fashion

Certain fashion and music trends have determined more strictly than others what young people should wear on their feet. At the start of the Seventies, platforms soared to previously unimagined heights as glam-rock flourished. Bolan, Bowie, Slade, Roxy Music, the Sweet, Rod Stewart and Gary Glitter all tottered on-stage on soles that added up to nine inches onto their height, their boots and shoes made from glittering silver and gold leather, often decorated with stars, moons or other motifs. If one person in particular is to be remembered from the early Seventies for his shocking shoes, it must be strutting dwarf Elton John, whose knee-length brightly-coloured boots and sculptured platform shoes became as much a trademark for him as his equally noticeable gimmicky specs.

In the second half of the Seventies, punk manacled together various elements of footwear fashion; if you could afford it, leather boots rattling with zips, buckles and chains were uniform – the predominant colour being black; for penniless punks, grubby plimsolls à la Sid Vicious, showing the maximum amount of daylight, would do just as well. In London in the Eighties, any style of shoe could be purchased to complete the specific look desired, be it Ted, Mod, punk or hippie. Carnaby Street was still the Mods' Mecca; a trip down the King's Road, Chelsea, would kit you out in jangling leather bondage boots, Woolworths could supply you with elasticated plimsolls for the Haircut 100 look, and dear old Hush Puppies were always there to ease your tortured soles.

FRANCES KENNETT



These boots weren't made for walking: Gary Glitter takes the weight off his feet (right). Elton John's stacks were more modest (above right). Opposite, from top: Motorcycle boots with studs, suede brothel-creepers and Doc Martens.

BORN TO BOOGIE

The electrifying rise of Marc Bolan and T.Rex

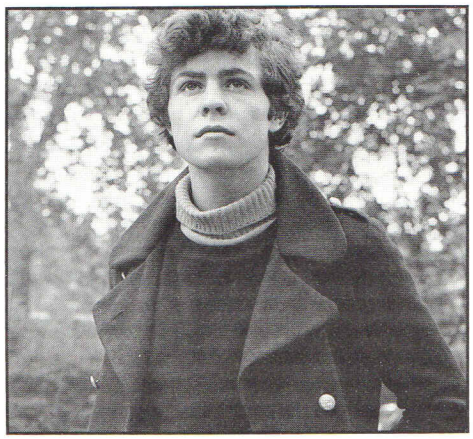
MARC BOLAN IS commonly considered the originator of glam-rock, although his career spanned the decade from Mod to punk and encompassed acoustic flower-power, modelling and hosting a TV chat show. His stylish image whipped up fan hysteria on a scale not seen since the Beatles' heyday and, from 1970 to 1977, he was responsible for T.Rex's 15 Top Twenty hits in the UK and one US Top Ten entry. Bolan was a star – one of the few really glamorous pop heroes.

He was born Marc Feld in Hackney, London, on 30 September 1947. The son of an East End lorry driver, Marc learned his street savvy in the playgrounds of Stoke Newington and helping out on his mother's barrow in Soho's Berwick Street market. His parents encouraged his early musical ambitions by buying him a drum kit and guitar. He played in a school trio called Susie and the Hula Hoops behind Helen Shapiro, who was to become a star some two years later.

Bolan used to skip school to 'hang out' around Soho and the 2 Is coffee bar, where skiffle had its first flowering. He listened to records and spent all his earnings from after-school jobs and the market stall on clothes. His first suit (which his mother paid for) was made to his own design by Burtons. He read poetry and mixed with the fringes of bohemia, where he was accepted for his child-like good looks and sharp dress-sense. At 14 he was a proto-Mod; talented and ambitious, he nevertheless lacked direction.

It was his photogenic qualities that gave him his first taste of success. Through an acquaintance, journalist Angus McGill, Marc was chosen as a representative of the Mod generation and, photographed with typical gritty realism by Don McCullin, appeared on the cover of *Town* magazine. Further modelling work led to Marc's image appearing throughout the country as a cardboard cutout in the windows of the John Temple tailoring chain and in various mail-order catalogues. He also flirted with the idea of an acting career, playing a small role in an episode of the children's TV series 'Orlando'.

The idea gradually crystallised that the music business might be the answer. While sharing a flat with Alan Warren, a young helper on ITV's 'Five O'Clock Club', Marc cut an acetate of a Betty Everett number, 'You're No Good', under the name of Toby Tyler. Warren had some publicity photos done by Mike McGrath and tried to sell the package to Rediffusion TV, but got nowhere. Marc decided that he had to write some of his own material, improve his guitar-playing and come up with a distinctive sound.



During the period 1964-65 he did just that. His extremely fertile mind started to weave the fantasies that appeared in his lyrics and in his life story. His imagination could transform a fortnight in Paris with actor Riggs O'Hara into a six-month stay with a French wizard in a magical castle learning the black arts – a story that cropped up again and again in Bolan's early publicity material. Impressed by Dylan's technique of packing his lyrics with images, Bolan began to evolve a similar style of his own. He also set out to capitalise on his thin voice by developing a unique wavering nasal delivery, which he went on to use throughout his career. His guitar work, always a weak point, improved with hours and hours of arduous strumming practice.

Childish antics

As Marc Bowland, he had his first official release with 'The Wizard' on Decca in 1965, produced by John Economedies and complete with bass, drums, orchestra and chorus. Although slightly out of the ordinary, and critically well-received, the single failed to chart. It did, however, lead to an appearance on 'Ready, Steady, Go!', where Marc first encountered the electric guitar-playing of Jimi Hendrix – an experience that was to influence his long-term development. At the same TV show, Marc also met B. P. Fallon, who was to become a life-long friend, publicist and general sounding-board for ideas. A second, equally unsuccessful Decca single, 'The Third Degree'/'San Francisco Poet', followed, and was the first to feature the name Marc Bolan. In 1966, he appeared again on 'Ready, Steady, Go!' to promote 'Hippy Gumbo' (on Columbia), but it was to be another critically-acclaimed flop.

It was at this time that Bolan walked into the life of the Yardbirds producer/manager Simon Napier-Bell, who spotted the potential of Bolan's unique songs but, with hindsight, was perhaps not the man

Rake's progress: Marc Bolan's path from fresh-faced youth as a model (above left) to the dizzy heights of T.Rextasy (right) took him through the quiet acoustic idyll of the hippie years, when he and Steve Took made up the duo Tyrannosaurus Rex (left).

to handle them. He recorded Marc singing with acoustic guitar accompaniment and did the rounds of the record companies to no avail – nobody liked Marc's high-pitched, quavering whine of a voice. Napier-Bell then persuaded Marc to join John's Children, a band that he managed; the idea was that Marc would write all their material, play electric guitar (learning as he did so) and be heard by a ready-made audience.

The band John's Children, one of the first signings to Kit Lambert's Track label, were a bizarre and virtually talentless outfit that myth and dim memory have endowed with pretensions as a precursor of both glam-rock and nihilist punk. Their carefully contrived stage show featured more fighting, destruction and general mayhem than actual playing and ultimately resulted in their being fired from supporting the Who on a tour of West Germany when they incited a full-scale riot that had to be suppressed by troops.

Bolan's role in this drunken, brawling outfit was equally bizarre; most of the time he remained the introverted, intense songwriter/poet, but for gigs he would emerge briefly to play basic psychedelic lead guitar, dance around and whip his equipment to pieces with lengths of chain. Although most of the songs they played live were Bolan originals, John's Children's recorded output was small. They had a minor hit with 'Desdemona' in June 1967, and released a supposedly live album *Orgasm* (a studio album, in fact, with audience screams lifted from a Beatles film).

A monster success?

John's Children remained at best an *ad hoc* outfit in tune with the happy-go-lucky ethos of 1967, but Bolan was frustrated by the lack of recognition for his own role and advertised in the music press for musicians to join a band of his own. As he intended it to be the biggest musical phenomenon of all time, he called the band Tyrannosaurus Rex after the world's largest-ever carnivore. The first recruit was a drummer called Steve Peregrine Took, probably chosen as much for his name (from *The Lord Of The Rings*) as for his ability. Together with a guitarist and bass player, the electric Tyrannosaurus Rex played one disastrous, unrehearsed gig at the Electric Garden (later Middle Earth) in London's Covent Garden. Marc should have realised, after all his false starts, that success would not come in such an off-the-wall fashion. The debacle was further compounded by Track Records repossessing Marc's electric guitar equipment and Steve having to sell his double drum kit. Out of necessity, therefore, the acoustic duo of Tyrannosaurus Rex emerged, with Bolan on a cheap acoustic guitar and Steve Peregrine Took on bongos.

The cross-legged, long-haired pair with their songs full of the magical imagery of mystical lands, elves and pixies became a well-known sight in the hippie era of 1968, although at gigs they were virtually unamplified and sat almost out of view below head height on a prayer mat. The first person to help them reach a wider audience was DJ John Peel. Post-pirate and pre-Radio One, Peel was at that time reduced to running a travelling roadshow. He was so impressed by Bolan (having frequently played a two-year-old copy of 'Hippy Gumbo') that he arranged a gig format with Tyrannosaurus Rex playing acoustically between Peel's own sets of the latest recorded sounds.

A helping hand came from American producer Tony Visconti (later to do major work with Bowie). He signed them to the Regal Zonophone label and in 1968 they released two singles, 'Debora' (which reached Number 34) and 'One Inch Rock' (which made Number 28), together with two albums, *My People Were Fair And Had Sky In Their Hair, But Now They're Content To Wear Stars On Their Brows* and *Prophets, Seers and Sages/The Angels Of The Ages*. Bolan's love of the sheer sound of words – as suggested by the titles – and the shimmering imagery he was able to conjure up shone through the simple songs and complex delivery of these records.

During this period Bolan became more sure of himself. His naive faith was being replaced by absolute certainty. Technically he was more proficient, although he still resisted Visconti's urgings to electrify the sound and re-introduce bass and drums. Domestically he finally made the leap of leaving home and settling into a flat with June Child, who had met Marc through her job at Blackhill Enterprises – the concert-promotions company that handled Pink Floyd's shows – when Marc had asked them to look at Tyrannosaurus Rex. The group slowly built up their following and their price rose from £10 to £150 per night while Marc wrote streams of poetry and songs in his little music room in their small Notting Hill flat.

The transitional years in Bolan's career were 1969 and 1970. During 1969 Tyrannosaurus Rex released their best album, *Unicorn*, and a transitional single, 'King Of The Rumbling Spires', that featured electric guitar. At the end of a US tour, Steve Took – heavily into LSD at the time – decided to quit; Bolan replaced him with another tall and gentle bongo player, Mickey Finn. Bolan completed the album *Beard Of Stars* almost single-handedly, using a good deal of electric instrumentation, and began introducing his Stratocaster for the final numbers at concerts.

Bolan's breakthrough came in autumn 1970 with 'Ride A White Swan', a single that was to become a pop classic. He was hell-bent on becoming a star, and in this song he brought together all the elements of a good commercial hit – a chugging boogie beat, simply delivered sing-song lyrics and a catchy melody. It was also the first release by the more pronounceable T.Rex. One airplay was enough to set the sales rolling, and the disc went on to reach Number 2 in the UK charts.

Left: Metal Guru Marc dominates the studio on the London Weekend Television show, 'Supersonic'. Inset below left: Bolan spreads his wings with Mickey Finn.

Getting it on

To hang on to the success that 'Ride A White Swan' brought him, it was necessary for Bolan to promote his image and material through live gigs. The tour of the States the previous year had highlighted the limitations of the acoustic duo format – they simply could not play large venues. So Bolan recruited Steve Currie on bass, Bill Fyfield (nicknamed Legend after his former band) on drums and engaged former Turtles Howard Kaylan and Mark Volman as backing singers, a role they had already fulfilled on the *T.Rex* album, released in 1970. Bolan then got to work on his image, vamping up his appearance with the corkscrew hairstyle, the gold suits, sequins and mascara that were to become his and glam-rock's trademarks.

With T.Rex's next single, the even more commercial 'Hot Love', hitting the Number 1 spot early in 1971, and his subsequent appearance in satin and stardust on 'Top Of The Pops', many of Bolan's former underground followers slammed him for 'selling out'. But Bolan was up where he wanted to be, and was now reaching a wider audience. T.Rex's singles success reads like a dream: following on the trail of 'Hot Love' in 1971 came 'Get It On' (Number 1) and 'Jeepster' (Number 2), while the following year saw two Number 1 hits with 'Telegram Sam' and 'Metal Guru', two Number 2 singles with 'Children Of The Revolution' and 'Solid Gold Easy Action' and a Number 7 with 'Debora'/'One Inch Rock'. In 1973 '20th Century Boy' made Number 3 and 'The Groover' peaked at Number 4. 'Get It On', retitled 'Bang A Gong' to avoid confusion with a 1971 chart hit by Chase, also called 'Get It On', made Number 10 in the US in 1972.

> 'The only times I've really been shook lately is like at the weekends there's probably three or four hundred chicks outside, you know. Well, I don't know where they got the address from, but they appear, you know, and suddenly I look out of the window and they all sort of scream and I think well, it sounds very naive, I mean sometimes I'm really not aware of it at all.'
>
> **Marc Bolan**

T.Rex were also instrumental in bringing commercial pop into the album charts. Their next two LPs, *Electric Warrior* (1971) and *The Slider* (1972), both hit the top of the UK album charts – and the former began many a pop fan's album collection. And Bolan capitalised on his immense success by making a film. In collaboration with Ringo Starr, he starred in

an exploitative but successful documentary, *Born To Boogie*, using footage from the sellout concerts at the Empire Pool, Wembley, in 1972.

Coke and cognac

Bolan's halo was beginning to slip, however. Young fans were being tempted away by fresh new idols like Donny Osmond and David Cassidy. Bolan's excesses were starting to show in his spreading waistline and bloated face. BBC-TV's 'Nationwide' unkindly spliced together a medley to demonstrate how similar many of T.Rex's singles were. Always able to give an interviewer good copy, Marc had been the darling of the rock press, but they, too, began to turn against him as he became increasingly egotistical and self-opinionated.

The problem was not so much success as the habits it brought with it. Cocaine and cognac, which he could now afford in large quantities, resulted in schizophrenia and paranoia. Screaming bouts of temper, selfishness and general high-handedness not only alienated the press, but also destroyed his private life. Old friends like John Peel and Tony Visconti were discarded as no longer useful; Bill Legend and Mickey Finn left the band (Mickey bought an antique shop in the King's Road, Chelsea); and June Child, whom Bolan had married in 1970, left him after finally losing out to extra-marital affairs.

His recorded work suffered; after 'The Groover' (1973), T.Rex's singles failed to make the Top Ten; *Zinc Alloy And The Hidden Riders Of Tomorrow* (1974) received bad reviews and sales were poor. The resilient Bolan bounced back, however, as his relationship with singer/songwriter/producer Gloria Jones, whom he had met in LA in 1973, blossomed and a son, Rolan, was born to them in 1975. He cut down on drugs and drink and concentrated on serious musical work. A self-mocking ballad, 'Whatever Happened To The Teenage Dream', had preceded a UK tour with a revamped and more professional T.Rex in 1974, featuring Gloria Jones on vocals and clavinet, Steve Currie (bass), Davey Lutton (drums) and former Beach Boy sessioneer Dino Dines on keyboards. The albums of the period – *Bolan's Zip Gun* (1974) and *Futuristic Dragon* (1976) – were patchy flops, although he still managed to squeeze into the UK Top Twenty with the singles 'New York City' and 'I Love To Boogie'.

Bolan's career seemed to be picking up. He did a series of interviews for ITV's *Today* programme and, in his more familiar role with T.Rex, made regular appearances on Mike Mansfield's 'Supersonic' for London Weekend Television, using all the flash, trash and over-the-top presentation he could muster. But rock 'n'roll was still his avowed priority, and by 1977 he had put together the most technically proficient T.Rex line-up ever, with Herbie Flowers (later with Sky) on bass, Tony Newman on drums, Dino Dines on keyboards and Miller Anderson on guitar.

Above: Marc struts in the limelight. Never one to stay in the shadows, he tenaciously revived his flagging fortunes in 1976.

They worked on an album, *Dandy In The Underworld*, and toured with the Damned.

The last boogie

For years, Bolan had been describing himself as a 'street punk', so he welcomed the punk revolution as a return to basic rock 'n'roll and an exorcism of glam-rock. Somewhat plumper, with his hair peroxided at the front, Bolan found a renewed confidence, playing to a new generation of fans who acknowledged both his past contribution to music and his current mastery. He was working on a new album and there were rumours of a deal with RCA; he also had a regular column in *Record Mirror*. It was from this position that he embarked upon his last venture – a series of shows for Granada TV. The final episode, featuring a duet with David Bowie, had not even been screened when Bolan died. On 6 September 1977 he and Gloria were returning from an evening out at Morton's nightclub in Berkeley Square, London, when Gloria, who was driving, lost control of their purple Mini and hit a tree. Bolan was killed instantly; he was not yet 30. Three years later, in 1980, Steve Took, who had had a spell with the Pink Fairies since leaving Bolan, died a drugs casualty; Steve Currie died in 1981.

Since Bolan's death there has been the inevitable managerial exploitation, with Simon Napier-Bell releasing acoustic tapes from 1966 with a rock backing added. However, such has been the interest of loyal fans that the Marc Bolan Fan Club (the second largest in Europe) has been able to buy up EMI's tape catalogue and supervise a controlled series of new releases and reissues.

What set Marc Bolan aside from other stars was his drive, ambition, savvy, charm and – as one of his friends put it – 'his incredible sense of style'. Britain's most celebrated star of the early Seventies, he brought glamour, fun and teen-appeal back into rock – and his influence remained current into the Eighties.

CHRISTOPHER NORTH

T.REX
Discography (to 1977)

Singles
Debora/Child Star (Regal Zonophone, 1968); One Inch Rock/Salamanda Palaganda (Regal Zonophone, 1968); Pewter Suitor/Warlord Of The Royal Crocodiles (Regal Zonophone 3016, 1969); King Of The Rumbling Spires/Do You Remember? (Regal Zonophone 3022, 1969); By The Light Of The Magical Moon/Find A Little Wood (Regal Zonophone 3025, 1970); Ride A White Swan/Is It Love/Summertime Blues (Fly BUG 1, 1970); Hot Love/King Of The Mountain Cometh/Woodland Rock (Fly BUG 6, 1971); Get It On/There Was A Time/Raw Ramp (Fly BUG 10, 1971); Jeepster/Life's A Gas (Fly BUG 16, 1971); Telegram Sam/Baby Strange/Cadillac (T.Rex 101, 1972); Debora/One Inch Rock/The Woodland Bop/Seal Of Seasons (Magnifly Echo 102); Metal Guru/Lady/Thunderwing (EMI MARC 1, 1972); Children Of The Revolution/Jitterbug Love/Sunken Rags (EMI MARC 2, 1972); Solid Gold Easy Action/Born To Boogie (EMI MARC 3, 1972); 20th Century Boy/Free Angel (EMI MARC 4, 1973); The Groover/Midnight (EMI MARC 5, 1973); Truck On (Tyke)/Sitting Here (EMI MARC 6, 1973); Teenage Dream/Satisfaction Pony (EMI MARC 7, 1974); Jasper C. Debussy/Hippy Gumbo/The Perfumed Garden Of Gulliver Smith (Track 2094013, 1974); Light Of Love/Explosive Mouth (EMI MARC 8, 1974); Zip Gun Boogie/Space Boss (EMI MARC 9, 1975); New York City/Chrome Sitar (EMI MARC 10, 1975); Dreamy Lady/Do You Wanna Dance?/Dock Of The Bay (EMI MARC 11, 1975); London Boys/Solid Baby (EMI MARC 13, 1976); I Love To Boogie/Baby Boomerang (EMI MARC 14, 1976); Laser Love/Life's An Elevator (EMI MARC 15, 1976); The Soul Of My Suit/All Alone (EMI MARC 16, 1977); Dandy In The Underworld/Groove A Little/Tame My Tiger (EMI MARC 17); Celebrate Summer/Ride My Wheels (EMI MARC 18, 1977).

EPs
Bolan's Best Plus One (Ant 1, 1977).

Albums
My People Were Fair And Had Sky In Their Hair, But Now They're Content To Wear Stars On Their Brows (Regal Zonophone SLRZ 1003, 1968); *Prophets, Seers And Sages/The Angels Of The Ages* (Regal Zonophone SLRZ 1005, 1968); *Unicorn* (Regal Zonophone SLRZ 1007, 1969); *A Beard Of Stars* (Regal Zonophone SLRZ 1013, 1970); *T.Rex* (Fly Hi-Fly 2, 1970); *Electric Warrior* (Fly Hi-Fly 6, 1971); *The Slider* (EMI BLN 5001, 1972); *Tanx* (EMI BLN 5002, 1972); *Zinc Alloy And The Hidden Riders Of Tomorrow* (EMI BLNA 7751, 1974); *Bolan Zip Gun* (EMI BLNA 7752, 1975); *Futuristic Dragon* (EMI BLN 5004, 1976); *Dandy In The Underworld* (EMI BLN 5005, 1977).

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